Types of Choral Arrangements

Notation

• Two types of score layout:
  1) Open - each voice is written on its own stave. Use when the vocal parts have different texts.
  2) Close - SA on one stave, TB on the other. Use when the vocal parts have identical texts.
• Dynamics and expression marks go above the staves.
• Use beamed groups rather than flags (antiquated).

Four-Part Arrangements

• Often set a cappella due to the richness of the voices.
• The high tessitura of the SSAA often leads the arranger to add an accompaniment.
• TTBB is rich in overtones (as is SATB) and does not require accompaniment.

Textures:

1) Note against note -
   • Emphasizes the text.
   • Used when the melodic line has fairly fluid rhythmic motion.
2) Animated homophony -
   • The melody is accompanied by melodic embellishment in the other three parts.
   • May be used as a textural variant as it produces more rhythmic motion than note against note.
   • When two voices move together as melodic embellishments they usually move in parallel 3rds or 6ths.
3) Melody line with harmonic support -
   • Treble dominated texture.
   • One voice has more rhythmic motion than the rest which are identical in rhythm.

Contrapuntal Textures:

1) Countermelody - Harmony added at the end of an SATB arrangement to help achieve the climax.
2) Figuration - non-continuous fragmentary lines that provide rhythmic and melodic punctuation to the original melody. In four-voice textures, figurations appear in three voices with the 4th voice being melody.
3) Ostinato - short repeated motive. In four-voice textures, one voice sings the melody while the other three combine in either note against note or contrapuntal texture with ostinato. Use when the melody has little harmonic change.
4) Imitation - Points of imitation are most frequent. Afterwards a section may become more homophonic. Imitation often occurs at the interval of a 4th or a 5th so that it falls in a comfortable range for all the voices.
All-Female Arrangement

- Three common types: SA, SSA, SSAA.
- SSAA Range: (F) G - g2 (a2)
- Because the tessitura is high for the fundamental bass in the alto to provide the full harmonic support that is available when male voices sing an octave lower, a keyboard accompaniment is often included.
- Melody most often appears in the soprano 1. Melody may also in alto 2 for contrast.
- Homophonic textures predominate with contrapuntal textures used as contrast.
- There are frequent close spaced chords and parallelism.

All-Male Arrangements

- Most for TTBB, but some for TBB and TB.
- Rich in resonance and overtones and therefore may be set a cappella.
- Range: (F) G - g1 (a1)
- Melodies may appear in the outer or the inner voices. The melody may migrate among the voices.
- Homophonic textures predominate with occasional contrapuntal textures.
- Close chord spacing with parallel and contrary chord connection is used.
- Not write perfect 5ths below Eb.

Two-Part Arrangements

- Since complete harmonies are not possible, keyboard accompaniment is normally included.

Homophonic textures:

1) Note against note - most common. The 2nd voice parallels the first usually by a 3rd or a 6th. 4ths and other intervals are possible. Excessive parallel 3rds may become dull.
2) Animated Homophony - Begin with note against note texture, then embellish the rhythm of the second voice.

Contrapuntal textures:

1) Countermelody -
   - Independent melodic line that sounds against a given melody, maintaining separate pitch, rhythm, and contour. Achieves independence primarily through rhythm - it complements the rhythm of the melody.
   - May be above or below the main line.
   - May be text or a vocable (“ah”). If text, it is usually derived from the original text.
2) Decant -
   - like note against note but the added voice takes on the character of a 2nd melody. It usually appears above the main melody.
3) Figuration -
   - a non-continuous fragmentary line that provides rhythmic and melodic punctuation to the original melody.
   - Used to fill in rhythmic gaps.
4) Ostinato -
   - repeated motive with rhythmic and pitch components. 1-2 measures long.
   - ostinati work best with one harmony sounding for several measures.
5) Imitation -
   - use points of imitation at the unison, octave, 5th, or 4th.
6) **Canon** -
   - Not all melodies have the musical properties that allow for canonic treatment. Look for a static tonic harmony throughout.

**Three-Part Arrangement**

- Not all chords may be fully expressed. Therefore, keyboard accompaniment is included.
- Two main arrangements: SSA, SAB (SCB)
- SSA, SA, and SSAA - high tessitura. Use a keyboard accompaniment for the fundamental bass. The lowest voice either doubles the bass of the keyboard accompaniment or sounds another pitch in the harmony.
- SAB -
  1) Used in choirs with few male voices.
  2) Used in junior high choirs where boys voices are changing. The SCB arrangement is normally used. Many SAB arrangements may be sung by a SCB choir.

**Homophonic Textures** -

Note against note textures will normally have much parallel motion and close voicing is the norm. In SSA, the alto does not provide the fundamental bass.